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SUBJECT: TAR FAO RESPONSES ON SEPTEMBER 2006 SHOOTING AT NATULA PASS

REF: A) 06 BEIJING 21638 B) 06 BEIJING 21794 C) 06 BEIJING 22237 D) CHENGDU

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CLASSIFIED BY: James Boughner, Consul General, United States
Consulate, Chengdu.

REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

11. (C) Summary: During a recent Consulate visit to Lhasa, the Director of the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) Foreign Affairs Office (FAO) promised to provide us with a written copy of an "official statement" on the September 2006 shooting of a Tibetan nun at the Natula Pass. After our return to Chengdu, the FAO phoned on March 26 to give a verbal statement that officially classified actions of the border guards as "self defense" in compliance with Chinese law. On March 28, the FAO phone a second time to provide additional new information including the name of the nun who was killed, the condition of the second injured individual and the release of the detained children. End Summary.

12. (C) During a March 12-17 reporting trip to the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR), CG and Beijing Polmincouns raised with TAR Foreign Affairs Office (FAO) Director Ju Jianhua the September 30, 2006 shooting death of a Tibetan nun by Chinese border guards at the Natula Pass (Ref. D). CG asked Ju if he could provide any information about the government's investigation (Ref. C) into the incident.

13. (C) Ju said he was not in the country during the time of the incident and that he was not particularly familiar with the investigation. He said he believed that the case was one of illegal border crossers who had been dealt with according to Chinese law. Ju offered to give CG prior to his departure from Lhasa a copy of an "official written statement" on the case. He failed to comply with this offer.

14. (C) On March 26, Ms. Baizhen of the Consular Office of the TAR FAO contacted Congen to read an official statement on the "9.30 Incident." She was not willing to fax the document to the Consulate. A translation of the statement is as follows:

"Before dawn on September 30, during patrolling time, our border police discovered nearly 70 people illegally crossing the border at the Sino-Indian border. Our police officers tried to stop them according to law and advised them to return to the place they originally came from. However, instead of listening to the advice, they attacked our police officers, and forced our police officers to defend themselves. As a result, two illegal border crossers were injured, and one of them died due to the cold weather and shortage of oxygen, after receiving emergency treatment. This was an organized and planned serious illegal

border crossing case. We are going to handle this case according to the 'Citizen Exit-Entry Management Law of the People's Republic of China' and other relevant laws. At the moment, this case is still being handled."

¶15. (C) On March 28, Ms. Choeyki Drolma of the Consular Office of the TAR FAO called to provide additional information to the consulate related to our original request. She read a prepared statement as follows:

"Among the illegal border-crossers, Chudzom (Chinese: Qu Zong), 24, died after emergency treatment. Kesang Namgyal (Chinese: Ge Rong Lang Jia) was injured, but he has now fully recovered after receiving medical care. Others, including the children, have left for home and now live with their families. Some foreign media have still been broadcasting "untruths" about this issue, and some international organizations have made inappropriate responses to these untruths. We think this is irresponsible behavior. All sovereign states have the right to take necessary measures to prevent incidents such as this from happening."

¶16. (C) Comment: The first statement read to us by the FAO was "old news" and was similar to statements made to the press soon after the incident was widely publicized on the internet with accompanying photographs. When the video footage of the shooting was posted, press statements from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs dropped the "self-defense" explanation and began to refer to the incident as "normal border management activity."

It is unclear why the FAO called a second time to provide new information. This is the first time the government has released any information about the fate of the children detained at the border or about the other injured individual. Post notes that the majority of international press reports, including recent testimony before the United National Human Rights Council meeting in Geneva on March 23, identify the nun who died as 17-year-old Kelsang Namtso, which is likely her religious name.

BOUGHNER